

Essex County Complete Streets Policy

PURPOSE:

“Complete Streets” are defined as facilities that are “designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.”

As the County is responsible for funding and reviewing projects that cross municipal boundaries or have multi-jurisdictional impacts, a County Complete Streets policy will ensure consistency in the design and operation of new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and transportation systems that are suitable to the needs and character of the County’s rural setting. This County level policy may establish a model and provide useful guidelines for local municipalities.

BACKGROUND:

The concept of Complete Streets has been recognized and adopted as policy and law in numerous states, counties, cities and towns across the United States in the interest of improving multi-modal transportation options, safety and accessibility for all users.

Essex County recognizes that Complete Streets can increase the capacity and efficiency of the road network by creating more opportunities for non-motorized transportation, improve rates of physical activity and related health outcomes, improve community livability and economic development, limit harmful emissions produced by motor vehicles, and improve the general quality of life for people living in and visiting the County.

Essex County recognizes that bicycling and walking are important forms of transportation, recreation, and physical activity in the County, thereby contributing to health, fitness and improved quality of life.

The Essex County Departments of Public Works, Public Health, Transportation, Community Resources and Town officials have the ability to collaborate to develop Complete Streets implementation strategies and best practices that use a multidisciplinary approach to address transportation, economic development, tourism, public health and recreation objectives while protecting and enhancing the community livability, rural character, and natural environment of Essex County.

Essex County will support municipalities in the development of a complete system of safe and accessible bike and pedestrian facilities connecting residences, businesses, schools and public places. The County will promote bicycling and walking for health, environmental sustainability, exercise, transportation and recreation.

POLICY:

Designs and practices for complete streets include but are not limited to sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, paved shoulders suitable for biking, designated bike lanes, off-road paths, signage, and traffic calming measures.

Essex County will make Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations, will approach every transportation project and program as an opportunity to improve County streets and the

transportation network for all users and will work in coordination with other departments, agencies and jurisdictions to achieve Complete Streets.

Essex County recognizes that roads with low vehicle volumes and slow travel speeds may already safely and efficiently accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. However, principle county roads that are characterized as having high traffic volumes and high travel speeds and are important for pedestrian and bicycle travel to access and connect to destinations in and among adjacent towns, shall be considered for Complete Street treatments.

Complete Streets designs and practices shall be provided in new construction, reconstruction and maintenance projects in the County, except when the Department of Public Works Superintendent, with supporting documentation which shall be available to the public, demonstrates that one of the following conditions is met:

1. The cost would be excessively disproportionate to the need based on the following factors: population density, land use, projected and current motor vehicle traffic volumes, and projected and current bicycle and pedestrian use; or
2. The existing right-of-way does not allow for sidewalks, paved shoulders, or other improvements, in which case potential alternatives will include the appropriate use of lane re-striping, signage, traffic calming measures and/or enhanced education and enforcement

Best available Complete Streets design standards and practice guidelines for county and local roads shall be provided, maintained and implemented to the maximum extent feasible by the Essex County Department of Public Works.

Essex County hereby adopts this policy of Complete Streets as a guiding principle for our transportation infrastructure.

On a Motion by _____. Seconded by _____.

And a Vote of ____ For and ____ AGAINST and ____ ABSENT

This resolution was adopted on _____2012.